

BOWLS' BIG 2023 WEEKEND

Official Partner



CLUB GUIDE

26th - 29th May 2023

www.bowlsbigweekend.com

#BowlsBigWeekend

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WELCOME

We know that open days are one of the most effective ways to promote our sport and welcome potential new bowlers. Following the monumental success in Bowls' Big Weekend over the past two years we're delighted your club wants to join in with the 2023 edition.

Last year saw an average of 16 new participants attend our clubs.

"We had an excellent weekend. Bowls' Big Weekend certainly works for Tarring Priory and has given the whole process of attracting members new life. We have invited everyone who took part to weekly taster sessions."

Keith Brinsmead, Tarring Priory BC, Sussex

Holding a fun, well-organised Bowls' Big Weekend event will help you to raise your club's profile in the community, attract visitors and ultimately gain new participants – all vital for the future of your club. We want to help you generate as much interest as possible, but importantly we want you to have fun too!

This guide includes some easy to follow guidelines so that you can organise your club's event effectively. A successful Bowls' Big Weekend will help you showcase your club and give new bowlers a great first experience. Each club has different ways of working, but we'd encourage you to follow this guidance as closely as possible to make the most of the opportunity.

This document will provide guidance on the following areas:



Bowls' Big Weekend is open to all clubs affiliated to Bowls England, English Indoor Bowling Association and British Crown Green Bowling Association and is supported by the Bowls Development Alliance (BDA) and Disability Bowls England.

PLANNING

Planning your open day is key to ensuring your event is well-organised, that nothing is forgotten, and it is well-attended.

Engage and recruit your club volunteers as soon as you can. All your current members can bring all of their friends and family along to Bowls' Big Weekend.

1. Decide on your club's Bowls' Big Weekend event date(s) and times:

- Agree a date and time that works for your club and is most likely to attract your target audience
- It is strongly recommended local clubs liaise with each other to avoid clashes. This includes sharing the media coverage!
- Incorporate with local events
- Consider mornings, afternoons and evenings depending on the event theme
- Include dates for follow-up sessions in your plans and advertise sessions on our PlayBowls platform.
- If your club is accredited to deliver our introductory format, Bowls Bash, use that as your follow-up session

Have a list of "what next" for participants. Consider offering other options to coaching sessions. Try a Pay & Play, or offer organised Roll Ups for beginners. How about a Bowls' Big Weekend 23 new player competition?

TIP
Consider a flexible approach to Bowls' Big Weekend events - some clubs may wish to organise several events, others may prefer to concentrate their resources on a single session

2. Bowls' Big Weekend event duration

- We recommend pre-booked sessions of no more than two hours – this will ensure you can manage the number of people at your club and that sufficient volunteers are on hand to support.
- Splitting your event time into multiple sessions enables more people to attend.
- Remember – some people may wish to stay for 15 minutes, some the full duration of their booked slot

"It was a great day. I also coached Graeme Mac, the sports producer of BBC Radio Suffolk for his first bowls lesson"

John Rednall
Felixstowe & Suffolk BC



3. We will provide a free club resources pack including posters, flyers and balloons plus access to a digital toolkit through our online platform. Additional costs will apply for printing.

4. Agree a Bowls' Big Weekend event theme/image

Suggestions (or ask your members for ideas):

- Family day, cocktail evening, BBQ and Beer. (Consider local and surrounding areas, number of volunteers supporting, expected turn-out and target audience when deciding)
- Invite local organisations – this could include businesses/sports clubs/local community groups/schools.
- Additional activities/ entertainment e.g. music, bouncy castle, tombola, raffle.
- Fun activity with prizes e.g. target bowls for points or beat the club champion.



"Thanks to everyone at Bowls England with the organisation of the Bowls' Big Weekend for their efforts. We have just concluded a fantastic day which saw over 50 potential new members, aged between 15 and quite a bit older, come to the club and really enjoy "having a go" at our game."

Martin Hill, Barbourne BC, Worcestershire

PROMOTING

Need support marketing your event? Find out more with our Marketing Your Club Guide on page 11.

We've created a suite of free marketing materials to enable affiliated clubs to promote your event consistently. We will also be running free webinars to give as much support to market your event as possible.

Use as many forms of local marketing as you can.

Four of the most effective advertisement methods at present are **social media platforms and websites** (e.g. local Facebook groups, your club website, nextdoor.co.uk, Twitter, Instagram), **large banners/signs** in prominent positions, **word of mouth** from your current members and **local media** opportunities.

Create a plan that works for you but make sure it includes...

- What, where, when and how will you advertise?
- Complete the list of volunteers' jobs/roles as provided.



"The information provided at the Bowls England on-line marketing class proved the right advice.

We managed to increase our membership from 15 members to 33, largely because we hit local Facebook groups hard."

Albert Tapper
Addlestone Victory Park BC

TIP

Use all your contacts in the community that you can. Encourage your current members to share your club's event across their social media channels. Post on all of the community groups on Facebook and Nextdoor. Don't forget to bring that friend or family member who always says "I'd like to have a go".

ON THE DAY

The best open days are designed to run smoothly, without too many rules and without too much structure.

Ensure people are actively involved as often as possible and limit the time spent on instructing. People just want to have a go and experience the thrill of getting close to the jack.

Keep the session informal with opportunities to try different activities frequently and allow the participants the autonomy to decide what to do, how to do it and for how long.

Engage and consider the attendees circumstances when they arrive. Find out why they have come and what will get them to come back then tailor your offer to suit. Our 'Likely Bowls' Big Weekend Attendees' information within the Marketing Plan will help.

Green, activity and facility set-up

Who?
.....

Action:

Green set up, stalls/stands in place, facilities clean and tidy

Deadline:

60 mins prior to start time*

Refreshments

Who?
.....

Action:

Ensure refreshments are prepared

Deadline:

Ongoing*

Special Visitors

Who?
.....

Action:

Welcome any special guests/local media/local businesses and organisations invited to visit or support the open day

Deadline:

30 mins prior to start time*

Registration Desk

Who?
.....

Action:

For people who haven't pre-registered, sign in via a tablet or laptop

Deadline:

30 mins prior to start time*

Directing Visitors

Who?
.....

Action:

Ensure an event sign is displayed and volunteers are directing people to be welcomed

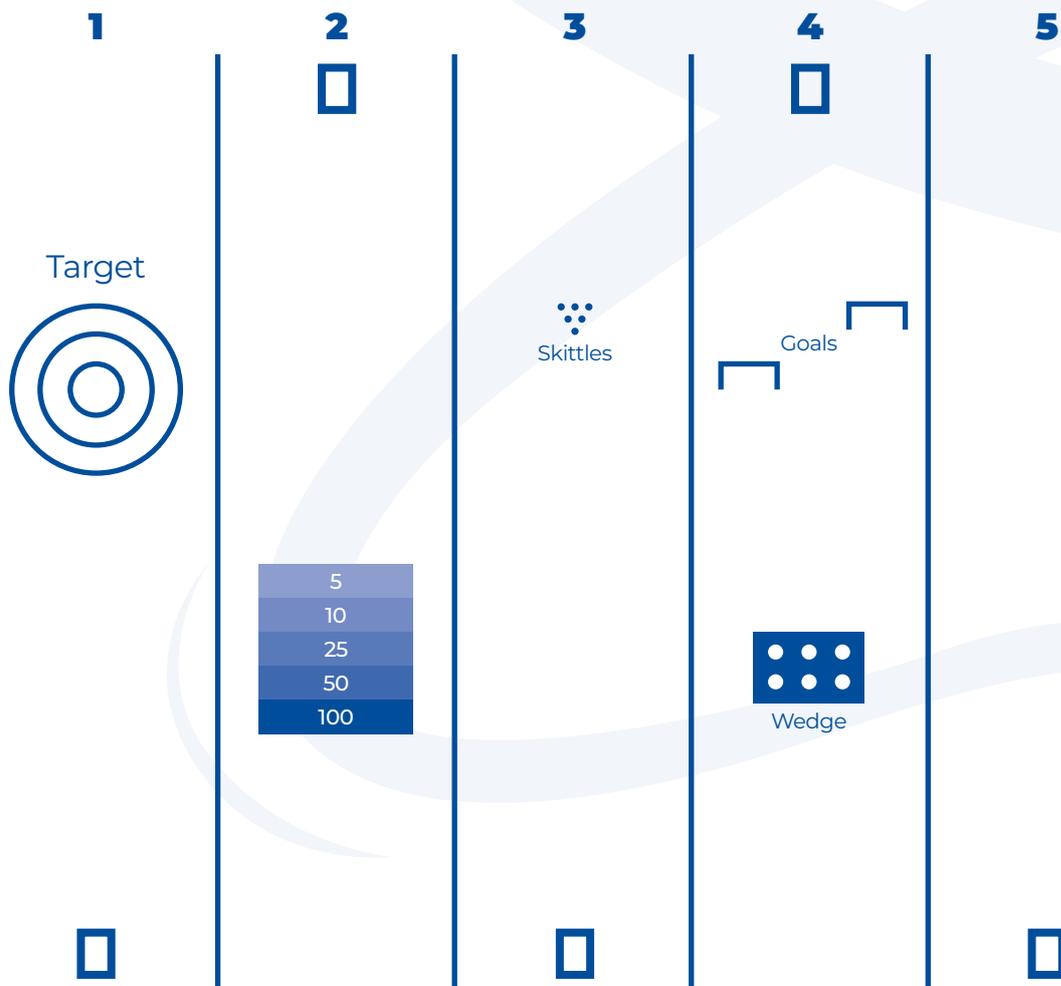
Deadline:

30 mins prior to start time*

*Use timings as guidelines

EXAMPLE GREEN SETUP

This is an example of a green setup depending on the equipment you have available to you. This can be adapted to suit any playing surface. Most importantly, make sure people are having fun and they can feel a sense of achievement. Adapt to make the activities work for everyone – consider a ‘Kids Zone’ for younger visitors or a ‘Challenge Zone’ for those who want to get their competitive juices flowing from the off. But always remember to tailor what you are doing for the attendees! If they want to play games against each other, get them going!



FOLLOW UP

Follow-up starts on the day itself – so make sure you have this organised too! People are most likely to sign-up for their next session on the day itself.

Make sure you have an appropriate and varied offer of activities available, some examples are below:

1. Alternative membership/playing offers available on the day could include:

- Monthly subscriptions.
- Pay as you play opportunities through our PlayBowls platform.
- Off-peak/weekday/weekend/family/unemployed membership packages
- New member incentives and offers
- Bowls Bash sessions
- Bowls Bash sessions (accredited clubs only)

Think about how you tailor the offer for the person in front of you - remove any barriers that could stop them coming back!

2. Potential new bowlers can find the traditional club membership offer restrictive – which is why we have launched our PlayBowls platform and our introductory format of the game, Bowls Bash.

- Our research shows that current ‘non-participants’ who want to play bowls would like to play once a week for no more than two hours – but are prepared to pay £5 per session.
- Over the course of a season this could generate significant income for the club – and they may decide to become a full member in the long-term.

3. Consider creating a ‘buddy scheme’, whereby existing members mentor a small number of new members for their first few months.

4. Sign up someone in your club to lead development, in particular PlayBowls and Bowls Bash.

TIP

Consider how you can make it easier and more accessible for people to access your club and memberships, whether that's children, daytime worker's or people with an hour available to them.

TIP

Many newcomers may not have the confidence to attend a 1 to 1 roll-up with a coach, they may prefer to join an established session suitable for beginners. Similarly, inviting newcomers to play in a match (even ‘just’ a league game) soon after the open day is too much for most people – it may even stop them returning!

5. Make sure you return the registration form to Bowls England so we can look at increasing the investment for future years. This is vital to improve the event, demonstrate to funding partners that future investment in our sport is beneficial and enables us to measure the success of the advertising methods used.

6. Ensure follow-up activities are organised and members are aware that visitors will be attending.

Suggestion: sessions involve a combination of fun activities and coaching, allowing for a fun and informal experience.

7. Arrange and advertise activities to engage with new and current members away from bowls and outside the bowls season.

e.g. social events including games nights, quizzes, bands and meals out.



"We had 24 attendees, all of whom managed to bowl successfully by the end of the session. Cups of tea and cake were gratefully received at the end!"

Delia Panter, Amersham BC, Buckinghamshire

MARKETING YOUR CLUB

#BowlsBigWeekend

Bowls England will be managing a national marketing campaign and exploring ways of getting national media coverage. It will also be providing marketing resources to help clubs drum up interest within their local community.

This guide provides some tips on how you should approach marketing your event and a check-list of all the ways you can publicize the event locally. Here are six important things to consider –

1. Talk positively about your sport

The majority of new bowlers will be inspired through word of mouth. They are likely to hear about Bowls' Big Weekend through existing players or family and friends of existing bowlers. So, remember why you love the sport and talk it up. There are some more ideas in the key messages section and we will be providing lots of content that you can share with your members, who in turn can share with their contacts.

2. Think about who might be attracted to bowls

Bowls is such an accessible sport; almost anyone could sign up to have a go. Be open to people of all backgrounds and experiences, as they will all want the same thing; to have a fun time having a go at a new sport and meeting some new people. The section below gives you a flavour of who may take part in your Bowls' Big Weekend event and what motivates them.

3. Set up a website and social media pages for your club

We know that lots of clubs have not got these set up and it can be a daunting prospect. Whilst it's not essential as there will be a Bowls' Big Weekend website to support your event, we hope Bowls' Big Weekend could provide an extra incentive to get this started and perhaps a friend or relative may help. **With our audience, the most important of all would be a Facebook page.** You can then make your club visible, include Bowls' Big Weekend as a Facebook event and connect with local people.

4. Use the marketing resources provided

We will be sending participating clubs a whole array of marketing resources to be used. These will save you time and money, and make your Bowls' Big Weekend look really appealing. The resources include assets for your website and social media, posters to be used locally and banners to put up in your local community. Please make use of these and also think about supplementing these with your own content, for example using pictures of your club. You can also purchase more flyers, posters and additional resources through our digital platform.

5. Engage your local media

Whether it be your local newspaper, radio or your community websites and community social media pages, they are keen to provide information to local people about how they can enjoy their local area. This is even more relevant at the moment when people are staying local. Bowls' Big Weekend provides you with a great opportunity to get your club promoted. Contact them, let them know about your event and use the resources provided to make it easy for them to publicise it.

MARKETING YOUR CLUB

6. Build local relationships

A local club will not have a big marketing budget so you have to think imaginatively. Think about the business and organisations in your local area who may promote your Bowls' Big Weekend event to their members, customers or staff. With the marketing resources you can make their life easier but, don't forget, they will want something in return. In exchange for them publicising the event, you could –

- Include their publicity material in a Bowls' Big Weekend goody bag for new people
- Promote their goods or services to your members
- Allow them to use your clubhouse for a business meeting
- Allow them to run a staff social bowls event at your club – you may even get some new members from them doing that.

KEY MESSAGES ABOUT BOWLS

Whether it be the ease of getting started, the social side of the sport or the way it makes you feel, share your positive experiences. Here are the main reasons why we think bowls is a great sport for anybody to enjoy.

Bowls is as **DOABLE** a sport as you can find. Physically, financially and practically, there are no intrinsic reasons not to give it a go.

Older people and those with disabilities or health conditions find bowls **VITALIZING**. It delivers significant mental and physical health benefits and can act as an essential social lifeline.

Bowls is highly **SOCIABLE** providing a level playing field across ages and genders. Competition amongst friends and family is authentic and clubs can feel like a home from home.

And finally, playing bowls is simple skill which takes a minute to learn, but a lifetime to master. Its **MEZMERIZING** qualities capture imaginations and give people the time of their life.



LIKELY BOWLS' BIG WEEKEND ATTENDEES

Our research tells us that there are four groups of people who are most likely to start playing bowls. Whilst these are gender specific, we know that men and women can enjoy bowls equally. The below pen portraits allows you to picture them and their motivations.



1. Junior Jess – Jess will be between 8 and 13. She may have heard about bowls through a grandparent. She'll be keen on the internet and, if old enough to have a phone, on it rather too much for her parents' liking. She may not be the sportiest of children, but likes the idea of giving a new sport a go and making new friends. Her mum and dad like the idea of Jess being active outside, enjoying a new hobby and building her life skills.



2. Casual Kabir – Kabir will be in his 40s or 50s and he will have older children who are becoming less dependent on him and his wife. He's always liked sport but never been too good at it. With the extra time on his hands, he's keen to start a new, fun activity which is easy to start and allow him and his wife to socialise with new people. He's still working so can only commit to a session, maybe two per week but imagines playing a bit more when he retires.



3. Sporty Sarah – Sarah is also in her 40s or 50s and has always loved sport, although she's given up because of the stress on her body. With the challenges of work and family life, she can't commit much time but really misses the challenge and excitement of competitive sport. She likes the idea of bowls as it's something all her family can do and she thinks she could enjoy the challenge for the rest of her life.



4. Mature Mike – Mike is in his 60s or 70s and has recently retired. He's eager to keep busy, stay fit and connect with local people in his area. He's always enjoyed watching bowls when it's been on the TV, likes the idea of a sport he can play with his wife and the having a place where they can socialise with like-minded people.

Please have a think about these groups – where they are in the local community, how to reach them, what will inspire them and how to give them a great experience when they take part in Bowls' Big Weekend.

MARKETING PLAN

This is not an exhaustive list, nor do you have to do everything. If you don't have a website, for example, use Facebook instead. View or attend our Webinars to get even better insights and advice in this area.

Key Areas	Actions	Who	Suggested deadline	Status
Club Website	Update your club website with Bowls' Big Weekend information, providing link to Bowls' Big Weekend site and Bowls England Play Bowls pages. Capture data of those who are interested.		End of April	
Social Media	Set up or update social media pages, particularly a club Facebook page.		End of April	
Word of Mouth	Inform all members about Bowls' Big Weekend (date, information brief, etc.) and ask them to advertise to their friends, networks and local community. Continue to send information and updates to members so they can pass it on.		From early April	
Invitations	Send invites to any local VIPs or people of influence and local media contacts to be part of your day.		Mid-April	
Relationship marketing	Alongside the invites, identify 20 local organisations and businesses who may help you promote your Bowls' Big Weekend event.		Mid-April	
Marketing Materials	Receive Bowls' Big Weekend marketing resources and ensure they are used effectively all the way through to Bowls' Big Weekend weekend.		April	
Local Radio	Contact the local radio stations and ask if they can mention about the club open day or have a club official on as a guest.		End of April	
Banners	Put up large promotional banners advertising the club's open day/s around the village/town/city and its surrounding areas.		Early May	

Key Areas	Actions	Who	Suggested deadline	Status
Newspapers	Contact local newspapers about Bowls' Big Weekend. If you have a volunteer or member who is adept at writing, ask them to put together a few paragraphs for you advertising the event.		End of April	
Community Groups	Contact relevant local community groups and invite them to the open day.		From early May	
Posters	Put posters up in churches, shops, surgeries, village halls, town halls, and any other places where large numbers of people attend locally.		From early May	
Email marketing	If you have captured email addresses of those people who may be interested in attending, keep them updated on plans with fortnightly email updates. Make sure you send them an email 48 hours before your Bowls' Big Weekend event with some last minute information on how they can make the most of their session. We will email those people who have registered centrally ahead of the event to remind them of their booking.		End of April	
Facebook	Advertise your Bowls' Big Weekend event on various Facebook groups and pages. Consider 'boosting' the Facebook page Bowls' Big Weekend adverts to get the post visible to more people.		From early May	
Nextdoor	Advertise your Bowls' Big Weekend on various local community groups and pages.		Mid-May	
WhatsApp	Encourage your current members to share all the information with their friends and family and across their media channels.		From early May	
Influencers	Engage with prominent local people to see if they can spread the word about Bowls' Big Weekend. If they are on Twitter, include them in your last minute message.		Mid-May	

BOWLS' BIG 2023 WEEKEND

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 AVIVA

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